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ABSTRACT

Today's global marketplace demands that employees have cross-cultural skills and an understanding of international business as well as different cultures. College and university students have unique opportunities available to them to gain these skills and obtain experience working abroad, which may help them attain international careers. College and university (and other) career centers have a responsibility and role in helping students achieve these goals. One university's work abroad program developed by, and run through, a university career and student services offices is described. (Contains 11 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Preparing Students for the International Marketplace: International Work Programs

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Abstract

Today's global marketplace demands that employees have cross-cultural skills and understanding of international business as well as different cultures. College and university students have unique opportunities available to them to gain these skills and obtain experience working abroad which may help them attain international careers. College and university (and other) career centers have a responsibility and role in helping students achieve these goals. One university's work abroad program developed by, and run through, university career and enrollment and student services offices is described.

The Value of International Experience

In looking toward the 21st Century, it seems that many U.S. citizens/residents (the term "Americans" is frequently mistaken to exclude Canadians, Mexicans, and Central and South Americans, all of whom are Americans since they dwell on the continents of North and South America) remain unaware of international interdependence. Clearly, with increased globalization, there is a need to provide individuals with an international perspective. U.S. businesses, government, and educational institutions have begun to recognize their ignorance and have taken steps to shape an international future. Today's organizations clearly need employees possessing skills that qualify them to work in the global marketplace (Gliozzo, Tyson, & Pena, 1994).

More students are working abroad than ever before due to current business demand for overseas customers or suppliers, as well as the supply of graduates who desire employment in other countries (Gates, 2000). The number of students interested in international work experience has multiplied dramatically in recent years and more students are taking advantage of international programs than ever before. Additionally, more of these students are seeking overseas jobs as first post-graduation positions. We are becoming an increasingly mobile society and the world is becoming more interconnected and cross-culturally integrated.

There are many reasons why obtaining international work experience can be an asset to students. Reasons include, but are not limited to: realizing an international career, increasing marketability, understanding U.S. and foreign business culture, understanding the global marketplace, improving international relations, understanding one's own culture, technological developments, increasing understanding of one's own culture, and understanding different cultures.

Realizing an International Career

While the demand for internationally trained employees appears to be growing rapidly, there are no definitive methods for obtaining and securing an international career. Young women and men who are anxious to work internationally in their chosen career fields may find it frustrating that, after several years of training, including language and area studies, few opportunities seem to exist that are within grasp (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994).

New Graduate Marketability

Work experience abroad can often serve as a bridge between education and preparation for career opportunities. Of course, no work experience, international or domestic, can ensure employment after graduation. However, many employers are looking for entry level candidates who have completed successful work experiences, and those completing international work experiences are in an even more exclusive group of job candidates (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994). In fact, experience abroad may significantly improve new graduates' ability to successfully obtain their first full-time international assignment (Gates, 2000).

Companies are constantly looking to reduce costs, and thus there is extraordinary interest by business in labor forces of other countries that may be far cheaper than in the U.S. Companies are constantly looking to expand markets, to increase sales, and certain foreign countries are often targeted for potential sales. In light of growing interest in foreign work forces and markets, involvement and experience in other cultures can be invaluable for understanding and being a part of today's emerging business opportunities.

Understanding U.S. and Foreign Business

In today's global economy, businesses want to hire multinationals because they want people who can easily adapt to and live in other cultures. European business reflects a difference

in values. Students need to realize that the U.S. does not always make better products than other countries do (e.g., BMW, Swiss watches), and speed and size are not always best. The U.S. also does not have a monopoly on innovation. U.S. citizens are spoiled for choice, speedy service, long shopping times/days. Students working internationally may miss the customer service provided in the U.S., but there are many other good experiences to be had abroad that can promote both personal and professional development.

Understanding U.S. and Foreign Business Culture

"You must know the culture of business in the other countries because it is very different from the way we do things here. Small things add up to major insults if you are not careful." (Gates, 2000, p. 8) To some, you need to have grown up in a culture to understand it. However, much can be learned from working and living abroad.

Often times, people from the U.S. are perceived by others in negative way (e.g., if they talk loudly on plane) and their confidence can be interpreted as arrogance. Many U.S. citizens are handicapped because they cannot fluently speak other languages. They are also handicapped in that they often do not realize that there are different ways of doing things that they may not have thought of if they had not been exposed to another culture where things are done differently.

U.S. citizens often use offensive language. Some use "in-your-face", aggressive ways of communicating. For example, businesspeople in the U.S. may say, "Kill the competition" versus the English (Britain includes Ireland, Wales, and Scotland), "discourage the competition". U.S. citizens can be loud, brash, and often the people you can hear talking on a plane…are easily identified as being from the U.S. Profanity runs rampant in the U.S. vocabulary, and we are so used to hearing these words that we don't even think about it. What to us seems like normal conversation may seem "uncivilized" to others.

Another mistake we make in the U.S. is that some people confuse countries. For example, Sweden is not Switzerland, nor vice versa. Norway is not the capital of Sweden, and it is the Czech Republic, not Czechoslovakia (Slovakia is another country now). In the U.S., many people think that all countries are run politically like the U.S. Socialism is often equated with Communism, and both are seen as "evil". Some people in the U.S. even believe that countries are like States, believe that the European Union (EU) is "the United States of Europe" which would only be true if the South had won the Civil War.

Members of the U.S. military also tend to socialize mainly in the expatriate community (e.g., around U.S./International Schools). They do not get to know the local culture. At times they may not realize that they are only there for a limited period and do not use their time to get to know the culture in which they are living.

Understanding One's Own Culture

Some people are born in a town in the U.S. and have never gone or been anywhere else in their lives. This insular way of living can have a negative impact for some people. For example, some of these people may not be able to understand idioms, or that their jokes mean nothing to others. They may also lack sensitivity to people from cultures that are different from their own. This may pose interpersonal and communication problems in their interactions with others, both in public and in the workplace.

Experiencing other cultures allows new perspectives that may allow increased understanding of one's own culture. Cross-cultural experience may challenge one's own attitudes and beliefs and be invaluable for personal development and maturation. Understanding and engagement in other cultures may challenge racist attitudes; cross-cultural experience may help transcend racism and discrimination.

Living While Working Abroad

Though a two-week trip to another country broadens the mind, it is not enough time to really understand a culture and the work environments within that culture. What is really needed to get to know a culture is to immerse oneself in it. Living in a foreign country can be an adventure to savor. If you are living in a country for an extended period of time, you may have more time to go at leisure and to get to know the people and their way of being in the world. In this manner, one can have a dialogue with the society, in which one lives and works. Living in a foreign country helps to achieve depth versus breadth. You need time to absorb your experience. Living in a country helps you to avoid the rushed feeling of travel conveyed in the statement, "If it's Tuesday, this must be Belgium" (K. Henry, personal communication, April 1, 2000). The other difference is that when you travel, you typically do not see the real culture, only the best "tourist attractions" that people want to show you. As a resident, one gets to experience more of the real culture and not just the tourist attractions.

The Meanings of Living and Working

Living and working have different meanings in different places. Quality of life in Europe, for example, is what some might consider "better" than in the U.S. Whereas people in the U.S. live to work, Europeans work to live; in general, Europeans get longer vacations and more holidays. Europeans also cook frequently (versus slamming food into a microwave and then down the throat), and Sunday lunch in Europe lasts three to four hours (K. Henry, personal communication, April 1, 2000). Many U.S. citizens, on the other hand, try to do everything in a hurriedly, and all at once. In European and other countries, culture plays a more important role in life than does business and there is a wonderful depth of history to be appreciated. How many

U.S. buildings can you visit, or even exist, that were built in 1020 A.D.? Working and living abroad allows for experiences of these differences in culture and history.

Technological Developments

The rapid development of technology has increased the value of cross-cultural knowledge and skills. Increased access to the Internet (Internet volume is doubling about every four months, Segaller, 1999) and to international travel have made it much more common for the everyday person to have contact with people from other cultures. In addition, immigrants to the U.S. and increases in specific ethnic populations, most notably the Hispanic population (e.g., the most common name in California is now José, D. Blumberg, personal communication, June 19, 2000), also makes domestic cross-cultural interaction more likely than ever before.

Understanding Different Cultures

A career counseling client might ask, "Why should I learn about other cultures?" Learning about other cultures has the potential to improve cross-cultural communication, enhance the development of cross-cultural relationships, improve international relations, to help covey a positive image of U.S. culture, and to make U.S. citizens more market-able.

Following is an excerpt adapted from Jones, Barnlund, and Haiman (1980) on culture which illustrates well the barriers that cultures create and which may be better understood and overcome by developing knowledge and skills gained as a result of working and living abroad.

Cultures arise out of the necessity of establishing processes through which people can preserve contact with one another, carry on cooperative activities, and provide for their own growth and survival. Without some common way of symbolizing meanings, each person would be condemned to solitary confinement within his or her own experiential world.

Cultures train us to select what is critical for our existence. Any member of a specific culture is capable of cultivating ways of sensing that are unique to their culture. But having done so, it is difficult if not impossible to acquire equal capability for perceiving the world exactly as members of other cultures do. The difficulty in shifting from the cultural biases of one culture to another can be perceived as frustration such as that experienced, for example, when driving on the opposite side of the road than what we are used to when in the United Kingdom.

Cultures exert great influence over interpretations of what is perceived. Even when members of different cultures see the same symbol, it is unlikely to have the same meaning for different groups. Every culture creates unique associations and values out of which members of a culture create meaning. Some cultures value facts, others feelings; in some countries time means little, in others it is treated as a limited resource; individuality is valued in some societies, but is feared in others. Misunderstanding and of disagreement can occur in communication between cultures occupying both ends of these continua.

Improving Cross-Cultural Communication

Perhaps nowhere is the impact of cultures as influential or evident as in communication styles. Cultures create certain ways of relating to others. Cultures influence what can be talked about, who should talk to whom, and the specific forms of communication that are favored (Barnlund, 1975). Every society develops its own agenda for communication, encouraging discussion about some topics and discouraging the exploration of others. Members of some societies find it comfortable to discuss politics, but not sexual behavior; others feel religious matters are private, but financial questions can be aired in public. Sharing ideas is preferred in some places, and the sharing of feelings in others. Some cultures converse in noisy argument, and others seek to avoid direct discussions. How conversations should begin, and how they

should end, is culturally influenced. There is often a proper time and place for interpersonal conversations, but the times and places are not always the same. Encounters between members of some cultures are very ritualized, and others are very spontaneous.

Cultures, by favoring certain human relationships over others, also open and close certain channels of interpersonal interaction. Every culture has a social structure of some kind. Some cultures make it easy to communicate within sex boundaries, but discourage interaction across them. In other social systems sex differences are less important than age, power, race, wealth, or education in directing flow of communication. A single message can provoke diverse interpretations when communicants do not share the same culture.

The hundreds of languages constitute distinctive and elaborate systems for sharing meanings within the same culture. However, people do not interact through a single code (e.g., language), but through a range of signaling systems (Jones, Barnlund, & Haiman, 1980). The presence or absence of a person is a form of communication and often a strong statement of approval or disapproval. Where people choose to sit may also reveal something of their motives and may affect interpretations of their remarks by others. A change of posture can signal a shift of mood or thought, a desire to speak or to stop speaking. Nonverbal behaviors are critical methods of articulating meanings. While nonverbal behaviors are found around the world, the interpretations placed on each behavior in combination with other messages vary widely from culture to culture.

Cultures, through what is sometimes called "world view" – perceptual biases, value systems, and social structures – and through their verbal and nonverbal codes, provide much of the raw material out of which unique personalities and meanings arise. It is through understanding these behaviors and meanings that students can develop their cross-cultural

communication skills. Every culture, including university culture, creates unique frames of association and hierarchies of values out of which members of a culture create their meanings. Students can enhance their communication skills through learning from career center staff and from experiences working and living abroad.

Breaking Down Barriers to Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

There are many barriers to cross-cultural communication. These include, but are not limited to, a) a lack of cultural sensitivity, b) lack of desire to communicate with people from another culture, c) lack of common language, or understanding of different dialects, d) lack of understanding other culture's nonverbal behaviors, e) lack of understanding customs, traditions, and f) a general lack of cultural sensitivity.

Living and working in another country is a great opportunity, which makes students richer in knowledge, understanding, and skills in cross-cultural exchange as a result of the experience. It is very difficult for many at first. However, students often find that they are never the same again after they have done it. Obviously, working abroad is not the only way to gain cross-cultural knowledge and skills. However, it provides a unique opportunity to put this knowledge and skills into practice in a real-life, hands-on way that is otherwise difficult to achieve.

The Role of Career Services in the International Work Experience

In his recent (1999) article published in The Career Development Quarterly entitled, "Career Services Imperatives for the Next Millennium", Jack Rayman reaffirms and updates ten imperatives for university and college career services. These imperatives are global, and cover a wide array of issues within career development and career services. Rayman (1999) paraphrases

Harris-Bowlsbey (1996) by stating that, "there is a consensus that the global economy forces workers to acquire and upgrade skills as an ongoing process" (p. 176). I agree with Rayman who reiterates an earlier statement made by Herr and Cramer (1996) that, "...career center resources must be directed to...equipping students through career counseling and educational programs with the skills necessary to fend for themselves in an increasingly competitive global marketplace." (p. 181) In his conclusion, Rayman states that, "The emergence of a global economy that values skills over loyalty, collaboration over competition, and change over security suggests that the realities of the world of work have finally caught up with the theoretical paradigm of career development as a lifelong process." (p. 183)

Despite these conjectures, Rayman, Herr and Cramer, and Harris-Bowlsbey appear to fail to explain what skills are needed to work successfully in today's global economy, how they might be obtained, and how career professionals can assist others in this pursuit. I would like to suggest that perhaps another career center imperative is the assistance of students in learning about, finding, and obtaining international work experience as one method for upgrading skills for work in the global marketplace. I believe that college and university (as well as other) career center staff have an opportunity to help their clients obtain the skills needed to work in a global economy.

What Is An International Work Experience?

One way to obtain and enhance skills for the international marketplace is through participation in an international work program. International work experiences (IWEs) can last from one week to two years or more. They can take place in any work or service setting -- research institutes centers for the arts, wildlife refuges, banks, community mental health centers,

etc. Participants may be senior citizens, eighth graders, college students, mid-career executives, career changers, graduate students, adult learners, or people anywhere in between. IWEs can be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid. They may be part of an educational program (e.g., a formal internship) and carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit. Or, they can be part of a work and learning plan that a student develops for him/herself (Martin & Baker, 1993).

In an international internship, for example, the important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or volunteer work are the intentional learning goals and plan that the intern brings to the experience. It is essential that students discuss their learning goals with their supervisor before the internship since they will want to be sure that they and their supervisor examine the balance between learning goals and the specific work tasks that the organization needs completed (Martin & Baker, 1993).

One way to set up an international work experience is through an already-established international work program such as the one described below.

Example International Work Program: University of Tulsa/BUNAC London Work Program

The University of Tulsa's (TU) Summer Work Abroad Program (TU-SWAP) was developed by, and is a collaborative program, run by the Office of the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services and the Career Services Office. TU-SWAP provides TU students a chance to live and work overseas during the Summer months. The program is designed for students who want guidance and camaraderie as they plan and carry out a Summer working abroad.

BUNAC

TU-SWAP works in cooperation with British Universities North America Club (BUNAC). This organization is well established and highly respected in dealing with work exchange programs. BUNAC is a non-profit, non-political organization and has specialized in operating trans-Atlantic student work/travel programs since 1962 (British Universities North America Club, 1999). Participants in TU-SWAP can be independent, finding their own way in a different culture, but BUNAC is always there to assist TU-SWAP participants, if needed. Most of the BUNAC staff have lived and worked abroad themselves, so they appreciate participants' experiences.

Eligibility

TU-SWAP is open to all TU students, including graduating Seniors. However, the majority of participants tend to be freshmen and sophomores. Students must be eligible to participate in the work exchange programs sponsored by BUNAC, which means that they must be registered as full-time students at the time of application, and must be citizens of the United States.

Career Services Pre-Orientation/Workshops

During the Spring semester before the students' departure, the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services and the Director of the Career Services Office hold an orientation consisting of a series of meetings and workshops which cover a variety of topics, including: (a) job search techniques (b) finding housing, (c) adjusting to life in London/culture shock, and (d) general information about European travel (the author can be contacted for further information regarding the specific content of these sessions). Participants are required to attend these seminars in order to prepare for their Summer abroad. The orientation also includes a

group dinner where students who are participating can get to know one another better and have an opportunity to connect with other students they may choose to share housing with while they are in London. In addition, as they prepare for their job search, students receive individual assistance from the Career Services Office career counselors and international library.

Work Permits

BUNAC provides the documents required for students to apply for work permits and arranges for obtaining these permits, which allow students to work legally abroad. Students can secure jobs prior to departure or, in most cases, a few days after arrival. The Career Services Office provides leads from employers and alumni specifically to TU-SWAP participants.

Employment

When planning their trips, students need to keep in mind that they are seeking short-term Summer work. It is probably unrealistic to anticipate a glamorous, high-paying job. Many previous participants have found career-related Summer jobs; however, many others have found work in secretarial and service industries. Examples of the latter jobs include working as a temp in the publishing industry, working in a pub, or working as a waiter/waitress in a restaurant. Some other examples of jobs abroad may include teaching English, working at a restaurant, or acquiring a six-month nanny position which may include room, board, and allow the student to live with a family rather than faculty, other students, or on one's own. Some TU-SWAP participants are able to arrange jobs before departure. While it is quite possible to prearrange work, this approach takes extensive research and effort. The staff of the Career Services Office helps these students develop job search strategies early on.

BUNAC has accumulated an extensive listing of employers that make finding work relatively easy and stress-free. Most TU-SWAP participants choose to find work when they

arrive overseas. Most past BUNAC participants who did not pre-arrange work from the U.S. find work by the end of the first week (62% within 3 days, 21% in 4-6 days, 15% in 7-10 days, 2% in over ten days; British Universities North America Club, 1999). In general, students usually have work within three days of their arrival. The Career Services Office and BUNAC can help students with knowing how to dress, what to say (or not say), and other information that may be useful during the job search. Representatives from these offices are available to assist students in their job search; they do not just hand students jobs when they get off the plane. The first few days are usually busy, and may be a bit frustrating, but students have the whole Summer to reap the benefits of their work.

BUNAC's London office provides a wealth of information to assist work abroad participants in the job search, including hundreds of postings of current job offers and names and addresses of companies that have previously employed BUNAC students (British Universities North America Club, Spring, 2000). The majority of students find their jobs through BUNAC. When students call potential employers from the BUNAC office, there is a good chance that they will already be familiar with BUNAC and the work abroad program. BUNAC's London office hosts an orientation session for TU-SWAP participants to familiarize them with British interviewing customs and proper appearance/dress. In addition, the BUNAC staff guides students through the remaining red tape.

Housing

In addition to assisting with the logistics of finding employment abroad in Britain, TU-SWAP also provides initial housing for students. Participants' first three nights of accommodations are arranged at one of the BUNAC-approved hostels (British Universities North America Club, Spring, 2000) in the London area which charge affordable rates. Having

guaranteed housing makes the first few days in London a lot less stressful, and allows students time to find private accommodations that best suit their needs. During the first one to two weeks of their stay, students are assisted in finding housing which may be in Youth Hostels, apartments, or lofts. It is also not uncommon for some employers to provide free room and board for the student employee as a work benefit (e.g., this is a common arrangement offered to pub employees). BUNAC has housing listings which students may access, and there are approximately twelve TU alumnae who may also be able to assist students in their housing searches. The BUNAC office is a great source of other information too. For students seeking their own accommodations, BUNAC has a bulletin board listing available housing, and the Career Services staff can help students to make informed decisions based on this information.

Trip Departure/BUNAC Orientation

During the month of May, the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services and the Director of Career Services accompany approximately twenty participants in the SWAP to London. During the first two days of their trip, students spend the majority of their time at the BUNAC office in London, along with the Director of Career Services and Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services. Every day at 2:30 p.m., BUNAC holds an orientation for incoming participants (British Universities North America Club, Spring, 2000). This is basically an information session that answers every possible question TU-SWAP participants could have. All participants need to do is to find the office. The orientation lasts for approximately an hour and a half and covers a lot of information. The BUNAC staff talks participants through pertinent information, such as tax deductions, National Insurance, and bank accounts. They discuss different ways to find employment and accommodations and give helpful hints for résumés and interviews. They also provide information about tour groups for England, Wales, Ireland, and

Scotland, as well as mainland Europe. Participants leave the orientation feeling more secure in their decision to come to England. The BUNAC orientation gives TU-SWAP participants opportunity to obtain answers to all of their questions and to meet other people who are in the same or a similar, situation. Participants make new friends that first day and are assured that BUNAC and the Career/Enrollment and Student Services staff is there to support them no matter what the circumstance. BUNAC has offices in London and Edinburgh which provide excellent bases from which participants can coordinate job and accommodation searches (British Universities North America Club, 1999). BUNAC's London office also has computers that participants can use to work on résumés at no additional cost.

Participants call potential employers from the BUNAC office to schedule interviews and "tryouts". Tryouts occur when a potential employee is invited to come into a potential work site and work for a day. At the end the day, the employer decides whether or not to hire the potential employee based their actual on-the-job performance that day. On average, it usually takes students three to ten days to find a job that they are willing to take.

Work/Travel

Once the student finds a job, they may stay and work for the entire Summer, or some students choose to work for a specified time period (e.g., one to two months) and then spend the rest of the Summer travelling through Europe on the money they earned while working. BUNAC also regularly hosts socials, including a Fourth of July cruise on the Thames, to which TU-SWAP participants are invited.

Case Examples

Participants have varying experiences working abroad. As an accounting student, taking part in the program was a good career move for 21 year-old Jane Reider. Within two weeks, Jane

had found work as an Account Executive at an accounting firm based in London's Trafalgar Square area. Her main responsibilities were doing bookkeeping and handling an account for a medium-sized company. With the money she earned, Jane shared an apartment with other work program participants but spent a lot of money socializing in London and travelling. During her stay, she backpacked through France, Germany, and Switzerland on a Eurail Pass.

Engineering student George Mitchell, aged 22, took a complete break from his studies to work for a marketing firm during his three months in England. Among his many duties, George spent a lot of time doing data entry, which gave him an ideal opportunity to brush up on his inputting skills. Having found a flat in West London, George was ideally placed to sample a true taste of English culture.

Costs

TU-SWAP participants are responsible for their own transportation to and from London as well as day-to-day living expenses until work pay begins. However, the Career Services Office makes suggestions for lowest airfares and keeping expenses down. The total cost of the program including TU and BUNAC administrative fees, first week of housing, and personal funds was estimated to be approximately $1,500.00 USD for Summer 2000.

Students make money during their work abroad, but they spend it too. Life in any large city can get expensive, and London is no exception. Participants should be culturally fascinated rather than financially motivated. A Summer spent abroad can do much more for an individual than provide an interesting highlight to the resume. Going to the European continent (e.g., an easy train trip from London to Paris) for the weekend is one way in which students choose to spend their money.

Benefits of TU-SWAP

Participants in the TU-SWAP program reap many benefits from the program both personally as well as professionally. Spending the Summer working in the United Kingdom has many advantages for students. These include the development and enhancement of their personal and professional skills, the internationalization of their resume, the opportunity to develop new friends and new perspectives, a means for seeing England on a limited budget and in an affordable way, and all the while giving participants the chance to broaden their horizons (British Universities North America Club, 1999).

The benefits of going abroad with a group such as TU-SWAP are many. Students have the option for house searching assistance in London. Also, participants go abroad with other TU students, which provides initial social support during their time in a foreign country. The TU-SWAP pre-departure seminars developed and presented through the Career Services Office, as well as individual assistance and career guidance, prepare students for their journey abroad, and give them an advantage over applicants who have not gone through such focused preparation.

Today's competitive job market has created a need for international work experiences such as the one just described. Individuals should be aware of the possible advantages and disadvantages of IWEs.

Advantages of International Work Experiences

Getting experience working in a foreign country can have a multitude of benefits. An IWE can be a valuable learning experience in several different ways.

Cross-Cultural Exposure

Living in another culture at a more grass-roots level than most overseas studies programs provide is vital. Discovering if the elements that attracted a student to a certain culture in language and area studies are still attractive in real life settings is essential to future success in the international workplace (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994). IWEs can enhance appreciation and understanding of another culture.

Advancement of Foreign Language Competency

There is no comparison to language training that involves total submersion in the culture where the language is spoken (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994). An IWE allows students to practice foreign language skills in a business environment and in a chosen field, not just day-to-day conversation on the street; students working abroad learn a bit more than simply how to ask where the nearest restroom is or where to catch the train. They can also enhance their skills by living with native speakers of the language they are wanting to practice.

Development of Adaptation Skills

Culture shock can be traumatic and affect career performance. An IWE is a good learning experience – it can be instructive in learning what to expect and how to deal with necessary adjustments to a new environment. Some people, after completing IWEs, may realize that they really do not want to live overseas after all (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994).

Contacts for Developing Future Career Goals

Networking is one of the most valuable tools for enhancing career development and job search success. Students working abroad develop a wide network. While they are getting to know their contacts and their contacts are getting to know them, students may ask plenty of questions about how to begin their own international careers. These new contacts can become

invaluable resources over time (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994) for developing connections with other professionals in their field and for developing possible job leads.

Increased Marketability

IWEs can be valuable work experiences that may provide an edge in career placement. Most employers value students who have completed successful IWEs (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994). Students may be able to gain specific preparation for the global marketplace, in the country in which they hope to work in their career some day. Students' international experience in particular makes them more marketable; it indicates that they may be more flexible, adaptable, open to change, willing to try new things than other candidates. Many of the top companies, if they were not multinational when they were started, are either now going multinational, or have plans to do so in the future. An IWE has the potential to enhance career development as students explore interests and employment opportunities and demonstrate competencies in an international work setting (Martin & Baker, 1993).

Possibility of Earning Money

Depending on the country, the field, and company in which students are working, they may be able to earn a reasonably decent salary. Students need to be aware that, in some cases, IWEs provide no payment. However, the experience is usually well worth the expense.

General Gains in Learning

IWEs can increase intellectual development as new hypotheses are tested and knowledge gained. Promotion of ethical judgment may occur as the student faces or observes the dilemmas inherent in making decisions in complex situations (Martin & Baker, 1993). Personal and social growth may also occur as skills are discovered and reinforced and interests in a new environment grow (Martin & Baker, 1993).

Social Awareness and Change

The capacity to be an active member of the community participating in addressing local or societal problems may be an advantage of the IWE. Increases in awareness and appreciation of other cultures may develop as students work in their new environments (Martin & Baker, 1993).

How Organizations, Schools, and Communities Benefit from IWEs (adapted from Martin & Baker, 1993)

For organizations that host students, IWEs have the potential to provide (a) staff assistance for special projects, (b) access to resources and expertise at area schools, (c) a chance to observe the work of prospective employees, and (d) fresh ideas and perspectives.

For colleges and universities, IWEs may provide opportunities (a) to improve teaching by creating partnerships with community members, (b) to conduct research on authentic problems of local concern, (c) to establish mutually beneficial relationships with corporate, government, and nonprofit leaders, and (d) to enhance admissions, retention, public service, and alumni relations.

For communities, IWEs can contribute to (a) additional services, (b) more involvement with educational institutions, (c) research help on community programs and problems, and (d) greater citizen participation.

Disadvantages of International Work Experiences

As with any opportunity, along with the advantages may come a number of disadvantages, including difficulties obtaining IWEs, stress, possible miscommunication, costs, substandard living conditions, and investment of time and energy.

Difficulties in Obtaining International Work Experiences

Many foreign organizations are going to be wary about hiring a student who lacks skills such as demonstrable language proficiency. Persons applying for non-English speaking positions must be able to assure organizations that they are proficient in the language and will not be a detriment to the agency (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994).

Doing Double Duty

While exciting, jobs overseas can be extremely challenging for those new to travel abroad, new to the workforce, and unfamiliar with their companies and business in general (Gates, 2000). These new hires have the double task of getting a grasp of both the U.S. market and on the other country's market as well. The student on an IWE can expect to experience a high level of stress in adapting to a new culture and new work environment. Students should be made aware that some corporate environments may be less "user friendly" than academe, though in Europe for example, countries such as Germany have strong cooperative relations between business and education.

Potential for Miscommunication

It is possible that confusion could develop about the exact job responsibilities involved in an IWE. For example, many students expect to be given an "important" job assignment and may be dismayed when their job responsibilities do not meet their expectations. It is therefore important for students to work at keeping lines of communication with employers open, to be clear about what jobs they are and are not willing to take, and to try to be flexible and adaptable if a job does not end up fully meeting one's expectations.

Financial Considerations

IWEs can be expensive. Travel, housing, and overseas administration fees (including work permits) are all costs not involved in a domestic job. There are some IWEs that are not paid. One should approach the planning of an IWE on the premise that he/she will not be paid, or will be paid less than expected (without allowing oneself to be taken advantage of as a result) of this premise. If the student is able to obtain a well-paid IWE, they should consider themselves very fortunate (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994). It is possible that a student may be able to make a lot of money, but this is a rare circumstance, and he/she may not have time to use it while in the country where he/she is working.

Living Conditions

Part of the cross-cultural exposure mentioned above includes living conditions. Students should expect housing and living environments in a foreign setting to be substandard to those which the student may be accustomed to in the United States (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994). It is important to keep in mind that the U.S. is among, if not the, wealthiest country in the world and that many people in other countries are unable to finance all of the comforts found in the U.S.

Helping Students Decide If An International Work Experience is Appropriate

In deciding whether or not to participate in an IWE, it is necessary to decide whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, or vice versa.

What will the Benefits be for the Student?

It may or may not be that advantageous for a particular student to complete an IWE. Questions to ask include, "Is an international work experience beneficial for the student's

particular career goals?", "Can a job in the United States provide the same experiential benefits?", "What realistic expectations does the student have about the benefits that will be given?" (Gliozzo, Tyson, Pena, & Dye, 1994). These and other related questions may help a student begin to decide if an IWE will really be of benefit to them or not.

Is An International Work Experience Worth This Student's Time and Effort?

Obtaining employment overseas usually takes longer than obtaining a domestic position. Letters of inquiry and resumes need to be written, in some cases translated, and mailed overseas. Applications, visa forms, travel arrangements, and follow-up letters all need to be resolved. Postage alone can be extremely costly. Therefore, a careful assessment of the student's commitment and available funds is important.

How To Help Students Obtain International Work Experience

There are many ways in which career center staff can assist students in gaining international work experience. Career counselors may help students access resources, begin networking, get in touch with multinational corporations that may have positions that lead to international jobs, and assist students with web searches.

Help Students Utilize Available Resources

Many schools provide a range of opportunities for students to gain international experience, including international studies and co-op programs, international college organizations and networking with students with foreign contacts (Gates, 2000). Many employers prefer to hire undergraduates over graduates for international positions because "companies look at the work as a temporary experience that supports education. And later, you

can more easily conceive a company that you are capable of working abroad, based on actual experience, and they are more willing to take the risk in hiring you (Gates, 2000).

Encourage Networking, Networking, Networking!

Do not let students overlook extracurricular activities that relate to international organizations. Involvement in an international organization may be a segue to getting a first full-time job abroad (Gates, 2000). Prior contact with an organization may eliminate a lot of barriers to getting chosen to play on the same team. When students go to activities later, people remember them from younger days and look at them as someone who is a team player.

Connect Students with a U.S.-based Multinational

Help students try to penetrate a U.S.-based company with extensive operations abroad, starting with its domestic operations. Getting to know the company's U.S. side can help (Gates, 2000). Ninety percent of a student's opportunity to work abroad is through a U.S. company with a branch in another country (Gates, 2000). Many students and recent graduates are targeting positions within U.S.-based multinationals as launch pads for future international assignments (Gates, 2000). Remind students that the best opportunities may not evolve from the biggest or most recognizable companies (Gates, 2000) (e.g., you don't need to work for a Fortune 500 company to move to another country). There are many unknown small- and medium-sized companies that also need people to work internationally.

Encourage Students to Look on the Internet for Opportunities

Start with a World Wide Web search. Have students interested in international work look at and review web sites that specialize in international positions, sites offering general information, and college-sponsored sites. Below are examples of web sites that may be of interest.

http://www.asia-net.com	A conglomeration of job opportunities in Asia.
http://www.duke.edu	Duke University's International Resources on the Internet. Resources are available for anyone seeking a job overseas.
http://www.brandeis.edu	Brandeis University's International Employment. Links to employment opportunities in many countries.

Conclusions

The benefits for students who gain experience abroad far outweigh the disadvantages. Career counselors may also benefit from being reminded of the importance of other cultural experiences. Helping students obtain international work experience is not all rocket science and luck. Many of the techniques used to obtain employment domestically are also transferable to the global marketplace. However, knowing where the differences lie can make or break a potential international position. Be sure you know the market you are helping a student look in for employment. Know the culture and customs (especially those pertaining to business) of that country. There are many resources available to help career professionals assist their clients in obtaining international work experience.

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